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Lincolnshire Diversity in the Arts: Research and Development



**College of Arts
University of Lincoln, United Kingdom**

Project Report prepared for the Arts Council England

By

Dr. Arya Madhavan, University of Lincoln

Dr. Sreenath Nair, University of Lincoln

Executive Summary

Lincolnshire Diversity in the Arts: Research and Development is an Arts Council England funded project, undertaken by the University of Lincoln, aimed at exploring ways to develop cultural/artistic diversity in rural England, by taking Lincolnshire as a case study. The project:

1. Produced and toured an Edinburgh Fringe Award-winning (1982) Indian play, *Charandas Chor (Charandas Chor: The Honest Thief)* in selected arts centres around Lincolnshire and studied its impact among the audience using qualitative and quantitative analytical methods.
2. Organised a one-day symposium bringing together cultural and community leaders as well as artists in an event of artistic exchange, around the theme of diversity.
3. Analysed the cultural strategies employed by Tara Arts, London; Black Country Touring, West Bromwich; Kali Theatre, London; Yellow Earth, London; as well as two artists, Shane Shambhu (a British Asian dancer and choreographer) and Ni Made Pujawathi (a South East Asian dancer and choreographer) in developing their rural audience.



Inaugural Lecture: the Bishop of Lincoln

The County of Lincolnshire



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1. Introduction

The aims of this project were to:

1. Assess the existing challenges of bringing diversity to the county's arts sector
2. Develop a model of multi-cultural theatre production that will pilot public engagement in diverse arts in Lincolnshire
3. Initiate thinking around artistic diversity in the county by collaborating with various organisations and arts managers/practitioners.
4. Develop a strategy to bring artistic diversity to rural England, by taking Lincolnshire as a case study.



The six key challenges we identified in our initial discussions were:

- a. **Distance:** Rural counties are often geographically vast, sparsely connected by transport networks. People in several villages in the county have to book a 'call connect' service to be able to travel for even their basic shopping. Does it have any impact on rural diversity in the arts?
- b. **Demographics:** Lincolnshire has a total ethnic population of 2.4%, with a larger concentration around Lincoln, Boston and South Holland (2011 census). 21% of the county's population is of retirement age, 5% more than the UK average, and the greatest fall in the number of persons over the last 10 years has been those aged between 25 and 39. It is worth thinking who our audience are and whether the current demographics of the county are a barrier or an advantage. Could demographics have an impact on people being able to pay to take part in diverse arts in the county?
- c. **Infrastructure/marketing:** How equipped are our arts venues, in terms of infrastructure to develop strategies and opportunities to host diverse arts? Are their marketing strategies helpful in informing people of such events? What support do they get in advertising and marketing arts events, let alone diverse arts? If we are focusing more on venue-based activities would that be a hindrance in diversifying the county's arts sector?
- d. **Cultural learning/Audience development:** What is being done to attract audience towards diverse arts? Several counties such as Lincolnshire do not benefit from the presence of diverse cultures as seen in Leicester or Manchester or Birmingham, disadvantaging our communities from any direct and immediate access to the knowledge and experience of intercultural

artistic interactions. What are we doing to inform and educate our communities about diverse cultures?

- e. **Funding/economics:** Perhaps the most self-explanatory aspect among the six challenges we identified would be funding. What national/local/international funding support can we claim to help us conceive ambitious plans to diversify our arts sector? What other funding streams are there that will help to diversify the rural arts? Could any aspect of cultural and artistic diversity be achieved without such funding? Another key question here is whether the economic capacity of the Lincolnshire community is a barrier for their participation in diverse arts activities?
- f. **Recognition:** Rural arts activities, let alone diverse arts from rural England, hardly ever figure in the national media. Not even the social media is capable of capturing and publicising arts coming from rural England. Why is this? Is it really true that nothing exciting ever happens in rural England? Could this have an impact on allocating funding for diverse arts in rural England?

The above six challenges informed and directed the course of research and analysis undertaken as part of this project. The rest of this report is divided into two parts: 'Part One: Conversations', reflecting a series of interviews undertaken with artistic directors/artists in Lincolnshire and elsewhere, and 'Part Two: Survey Analysis', detailing the findings of the surveys conducted for this project.

2. Methodology

The project was carried out through four independent, but mutually interdependent, phases of activities:

1. Public engagement phase (Symposium & Audience Survey)
2. Creative case-study Phase (Production of an Indian Play)
3. Fieldwork
4. Data Analysis and Evaluation

The first phase of the project was conducted between September 2016 and March 2017, whereas the activities of the second phase included rehearsal, production and touring of an Indian play (*Charandas Chor: the Honest Thief*), between August 2016 and September 2017. The fieldwork was conducted between February and June 2017, and Data Analysis followed between July and Oct 2017. The methodological framework of the project was a combination of case study, questionnaire and interviews, integrating both quantitative data analysis and qualitative approach to ethnographic research methods.

The aim of the symposium and audience survey was to consult and evaluate the on-going cultural/artistic diversity activities in the county. The symposium initiated a consultation process with the Lincolnshire arts centre venue managers, artistic directors, school head-teachers, artists, representatives of diocese, representatives of BAME community, officials from the county council, and ACE representative to identify the issues and possible solutions for the lack of cultural /artistic diversity in the county. The production of an Indian play *Charandas Chor: The Honest Thief* in phase two used theatre as a creative case-study for cultural learning and community cohesion. Two sets of surveys – the pre-performance survey and post-performance survey - were used to collect the responses from the audience. The fieldwork in phase three generated some highly useful oral histories of the origin and development of British-Asian theatre in the country, personal narratives and memories of the BAME artists, along with some useful data showing the problems faced by the urban-based BAME theatre companies in rural touring. The ethnographic research method used in the field-work was useful to explore the wider context and issues of the implementation of the *Creative Case for Diversity* policy in local NPOs. The following research questions were used to design the activities of the project:

- What are the existing challenges in diversifying arts in the rural England, specifically, Lincolnshire?
- What are the implications of ACE's *Creative Case for Diversity* in the rural and coastal ecologies in England?
- Should rural England have a distinct approach to cultural diversity in comparison to urbanised places?
- What approaches to arts awareness might engage rural audience in diverse cultural activities?
- Could theatre be a significant cultural category to impart cultural dynamism to less diverse parts of the UK?

Both the quantitative and qualitative data were analysed in the final phase and the project report was prepared on the basis of our findings. The project report was then sent to selected experts in the Lincolnshire arts sector to collect further recommendations and suggestions.

PART ONE

3. CONVERSATIONS

Public consultations of different kinds took place during the course of the project such as, 1. With the artistic directors/artists, academics, school teachers, ACE representative as well as officers from Lincolnshire County Council and other local community networks during the symposium on *Rural Artistic Diversity: A Lincolnshire Case Study* 2. With the key contacts of the local arts centres where the play was performed 3. With the artists/artistic directors of British Asian theatre/dance companies based in urban centres, particularly, London and Birmingham.

3.1. The Symposium

The symposium exploring rural artistic diversity was the first of its kind in England. Until then, the conversations took place predominantly in two separate directions: a. the place of arts in rural areas b. diversity in arts. The two strands never came together to create rural artistic diversity until this project was conceived. The discussions that took place on the day were channeled in five themes: distance, demographics, recognition, funding and cultural learning. Some of the questions discussed in the symposium included:

- What are the biggest demographic challenges in rural counties?
- How can these challenges be met?
- How can artistic diversity contribute to social cohesion?
- What sort of recognition do we want for artistic work, and why?
- What are the strategies for cultural learning?

One very important piece of feedback that we received about the project as a whole was about the wording of the project/symposium title. We worded it as ‘rural artistic diversity’ implying an acknowledgement of diversity of all sorts – gender, disability, cultural aspects or age and more. In fact, the project focused exclusively on cultural/artistic diversity. We acknowledge the issue with our wording here and will amend the title of the project to reflect the same in our future artistic activities.

The Bishop of Lincoln, the Rt Revd Christopher Lowson inaugurated the symposium. He commented that art helps in building communities and that it is a “quintessential medium for human expression” since it “express[es] feelings, hopes and fears ... as a human”. He commented that the project is important in “challenging the metropolitan imperialist mindset”. He fully supported the aims of the project.

During the symposium, one of the discussion groups stated that “Diversity isn’t a thing, but rather, the attitude of diversification [need to] be the focus”. The emphasis on diversification must be the key here, and the five key areas addressed and debated were the existing challenges to achieve such a goal. The suggestions from the discussion

groups of the symposium are integrated into the overall recommendations of the project at the end.

3.2. Lincolnshire Arts Centres

It is a known fact that more Arts council money flows into London centred theatres than the rest of the country (<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/nov/05/arts-spending-london-bias>, but we acknowledge there is an attempt to change this approach), but it is important to investigate if the products that the urban theatres create are made available in rural theatres for the rural audience. If this is not happening we also wanted to know why it is the case. The conversations with local arts centres were intended to ascertain the kind of infrastructure, funding and other resources they have to host diverse arts in their venues. Interviews with them also helped us to gain an insight into the character of their regular audience and the nature of the local community where they are based.

We communicated (online and face to face) with four out of five venues about the performance. Franklin college, Grimsby is not an arts venue and it is a FE college; therefore, we did not interview them as part of the field work.

Audience numbers and the nature of audience: According to the general manager of Louth Riverhead theatre, the audience for *The Honest Thief* was not their regular audience, but included those who would not usually come to watch theatre. In this sense, the play has successfully reached out to a new cross section of Louth, although modest in numbers. It is worth mentioning that we had 100% white British audience members for the show, which is not surprising, given that Louth is not a diverse community at all and it is quite rural in nature. But the survey in Louth also demonstrates that most of them had some kind of experience of non-European culture, particularly Indian culture. One couple spoke to us about the late Hindi film star Raj Kapoor and sang old Hindi film songs to us. Many had Indian family members or friends or had lived/worked in the Middle East or Asia. The play, arguably, pitched to a small cross-section of the community in Louth who might have wanted to remember their past experience of diverse cultures through watching the play.

Lisa Weller, the artistic director of Gainsborough Trinity Arts, shares the same opinion that the community in Gainsborough is also quite rural and less diverse in nature. But Gainsborough had a general cross section of audience members that they normally get for their shows. But, once again, the numbers were equally modest in a 200-seat auditorium. Local communities in Louth and Gainsborough were not thought to be affluent, influencing the pricing of a normal ticket. Both venues agreed that £10-12 is the most affordable ticket price for a live performance. And both venues normally get people aged 60+ as their audience. Therefore, the ticket price reflects the audience's ability and willingness to pay for any theatre performances, culturally diverse or otherwise. This information is well reflected in the survey (see the section on survey analysis below) since the majority of audience members were over 60 in both venues.

Familiarity and continuity: In our conversations with the venue managers one of the most interesting aspects was the issue of familiarity among audience and how that influences their decisions in terms of choosing what they watch. People whom we interviewed maintain that it is always difficult to bring something new to any rural theatre, particularly, culturally diverse shows, and get people in for the first time. Lack of familiarity to something makes the decision to part with one's money very difficult. Audience development is key here, and money and time are central to build the audience base for any show. Craig Morrow, the Artistic Director of Lincoln Performing Arts Centre, adds that consistency is an equally important aspect, meaning, consistency in bringing culturally diverse shows so as to keep the audience in touch with cultural variety is important. That, in turn, will improve the familiarity of the cultural product, as Weller too agrees. She says that the audience numbers will be better the second time, whether the show is culturally diverse or not. Continuity is important to improve familiarity among the audience. The issue of diminishing school audience in recent times is also a concern for managers and artistic directors of various arts venues. Schools are less willing to bring children to watch theatre because of the cost associated with such trips. The schools have to factor in transport, extra staffing and other technical things associated with any theatre visit. The introduction of the Ebacc system in schools and the removal of drama from the school curriculum, according to Morrow, has had some impact on attracting schools to watch theatre.

Creative Case for diversity – funding and support: In its Creative Case for Diversity, ACE acknowledges that it aims to recognise diverse arts without them being “devalued or being exoticised”, for their “true potential to be recognised”. Although the *Creative Case* policy may have a significant impact in areas with rich, mixed-race populations and ethnic diversity, rural counties such as Lincolnshire fail to benefit from its admirable objectives. Moreover, the *Creative Case* rests the responsibility to improve artistic diversity upon the National Portfolio Organisations (NPO). We asked the general manager of Louth Riverhead whether they were equipped or trained enough to undertake such a challenge. Riverhead gets £37,000 as an NPO per year from ACE and that money is against all their activities, including any work on diversity. Since the rural situation with regard to ticket income and audience engagement is different to the cities such as London or Birmingham, the assumptions that the *Creative Case* make need not necessarily be applicable to Louth, Spalding or Gainsborough. Riverhead, for instance, is run mainly using volunteers (and four or five part-time paid employees) and the expectation is that the venue attracts and hosts professional productions, and generates interest in a diverse audience to watch them. This is not a realistic ambition, according to the general manager of Louth, because funding support is very limited on offer to deliver such an expectation. It is very hard to achieve ACE's objectives using £37,000, few volunteers and limited ticket sales.

To summarise:

1. Audience development is key to attract more diverse performances into the county.

2. Continuity in offering culturally diverse performances improves familiarity among audience and that will help to build up an audience base. This is a long-term process.
3. Specific funding streams addressing cultural diversity are important to rural counties so that they can also achieve the ambitions set in the *Creative Case* alongside their urban counterparts.

3. 3. British Asian Theatre/Dance Companies

We interviewed representatives of four theatre companies, Tara Arts (London), Kali Theatre (London), Yellow Earth (London) and Black Country Touring (West Bromwich), during our fieldwork and artists – Shane Shambu (London based) and Ni Made Pujawati (Previously London, now in Oxford). The aim of this exercise was to investigate their experience of taking their shows to rural counties, if any, and their audience reception. At the same time, it was also important to know any problems that they faced when doing so, their reasons for avoiding rural touring if they did not choose to tour in rural counties and what they think of the potential for touring their plays among rural audience. Our findings are organised under four headings: a. Rural touring and audience engagement b. Challenges in rural touring c. Potentials for rural touring and d. Strategies suggested.

- a. *Rural touring and audience engagement*: Shane Shambhu is an artist and choreographer practicing an Indian dance form called *Bharatanatyam*, based in London. He spoke about one of his recent performances, *Early Years* that was toured across Britain including rural counties like Lincolnshire. This was a project involving children under 2 years old and enhancing their sensory perception through movement. He mentions that he had always experienced shock from parents/carers seeing him as an artist, particularly in rural areas, due to his ethnic origin. Chris Corner, General Manager of Kali Theatre speaks about their collaboration with Black Country Touring in the production of *Big Fat Cowpat wedding*, which was a highly successful rural touring project. The play and the production emerged from a wish list of everything that they wanted to include in such a production; the play portrays a rich mix of urban and rural as well as Indian and British cultural aspects. The play toured to several rural areas including Lincolnshire and since it was “deliberately curated to work well within rural venues”, the play, according to Corner, was a success; most notably the play worked for either audience – all white audience (eg: in rural Northumberland) and all Asian audience (eg: in Cardiff Hindu temple). But, this is the only play that has performed in really rural areas, most of their plays are pitched for a South Asian audience or centres where there is scope for large audience. But touring *Cowpat Wedding* was not without challenges – rural touring means that the distance between venues could be really long and travelling can be time consuming and expensive. So, the whole project was conceived differently to account for all the various challenges posed by the rural counties.

Yellow Earth has a different kind of issue – as Kumiko Mendl, the Artistic Director of Yellow Earth says, the Chinese community may not necessarily want to engage with artistic practice. The way in which Yellow Earth circumnavigates this issue is by performing in association with local Chinese take aways, local Chinese restaurants or schools. This becomes particularly important when they perform outside London. Mendl uses workshops as a means to attract audience, particularly younger audience. But their venues outside London are still cities – Nottingham, Manchester, Birmingham and so on. The proportion of their truly rural performances is still small. But their audience that they get even in cities could still be all white, as they find in several venues. Mendl speaks also about racial issues that the actors had to face when performing in small towns, away from urban areas; she says that actors of diverse ethnic origin could feel “quite exposed” when performing in less culturally diverse, rural areas.

Collaborating with a rural touring network is a good means to tour shows in rural venues. But Corner says that without funding support from ACE and subsidised ticket prices from a rural touring network, *Cowpat Wedding* would not have been a successful production. Meaning, specific funding support from ACE was an essential ingredient to ensure sufficient resource was available to develop a high quality, popular and successful production, specifically conceived and designed for the needs of rural touring. If culturally diverse performances have to have a presence and success in rural counties of England strategic funding to enhance that aspect is absolutely necessary.

Black Country Touring (BCT) tours across both rural and urban centres. Their method is a very interesting case study for this project, particularly in view of their approach to performance. They adopt, what we call an *a-proscenium* approach, by which they explore their freedom to use unconventional settings for their performance. *Cowpat Wedding*, which was a collaborative work between Kali, Arts Alive (RYTS for Shropshire and Herefordshire) and BCT is a good example of this. The play was exclusively staged in village halls, local community centres or church halls in both rural and urban centres, which increased the accessibility of their performance. We met Steve Johnstone, the Co-Director of BCT in Skegness, Lincolnshire, where he came with BCT’s new play *Life’s A Beach*, which is about the seaside experience of Skegness. The production took place in three caravans parked in a park in Skegness and each caravan could hold a very small number of participants, not even 20 in total. One would not even recognise these caravans as sites for a play. This approach, for Johnstone, is a “more honest” way to make a performance. Johnstone says that the ‘rules for engagement’ with diverse communities will be less accessible to rural communities because of the sheer lack of diversity present in rural areas. His approach is focused on dramatizing narratives from diverse communities, rather than presenting ‘culturally foreign’ performances (to local communities) as such, which may be less accessible to them. *Cowpat Wedding*, he cites, as a good model for such approach.

- b. *Challenges in rural touring*: Lack of audience for formal stage performances in rural venues is something that most of our interviewees mentioned. And that speaks directly about the financial viability of a performance. Performing in cities is considered much safer in terms of selling the show. Ni-Made Pujawati, a highly accomplished Indonesian dancer, acknowledges that she has performed largely in cities, mainly as part of Gamalan groups and independently. She now lives in Oxford, having moved from London a few years ago. Since her move, her performance opportunities have dwindled substantially and she now has to travel to London to make more artistic work. The added travel element has significantly affected her performance career, and she now focuses on making costumes for Indonesian performers, because it can be done as a 'sit at home' job. Even though Oxford is a lot more diverse compared to Lincolnshire it is interesting to note how her performance opportunities have halved since her move.

Another significant issue is the inherent devaluation of artistic work coming from rural counties or the perceived lack of impact when one performs in rural counties. Shambhu says that the sole aim of touring his work rurally could be just to "fill the exotic". He always questioned what his rural audience liked in his performance, whether it was the exotic elements such as "the beautiful make-up, jewelry and stuff" or the real value of the artistic work that he produced. When performing in a city, whereas, according to Shambhu, he can better work without having to exoticise his work. The last time he took any dance work to rural venues was in 2002 and since then he had not performed *Bharatanatyam* inspired work in rural venues. Whereas, when he played an Indian role along with white characters in the play, *Release*, (2011) he had better acceptance of his work in rural venues such as Cornwall, without being considered as the 'other'. Exoticising his performance, for him, is demeaning the value of his work. But then, the question is what proportion of the rural audience get opportunities to live in the multicultural London arts sector, and enjoy its apparent benefits. A *Kathakali* performance in Lincoln will be exotic (performed twice in LPAC in 2007 and 2010) since it is not a common theatre form for people to watch, whereas, *Kathakali* is not exotic in Kerala, India, where it is among the most performed theatre forms.

For Jatinder Verma, the Artistic Director of Tara Arts, theatre is inherently 'exotic' and this is particularly applicable to Asian forms. For Verma, the inherent exoticism is the fundamental quality of any theatre, Asian or non-Asian. And he asks why it is wrong to consider something exotic, which transports the audience to a different world. According to him people go to the National Theatre to watch theatre that is "different" and the *Creative Case* is ignoring this fundamental quality of theatre. Shakespeare, for instance, is highly exotic and it is still relevant today, having been performed all over the world. The question of exoticism is a highly important one and very complex in nature. We think that

the question of exoticism needs to be addressed very carefully and it is something that needs further thinking and examination.

Corner speaks about another significant issue for rural touring, which is to do with maintaining the quality of performance. Attracting the interest of first grade actors to work in a rural play could be challenging, according to Corner, because of the inferior status attached to rural performances. Casting celebrities to perform in rural shows is totally out of the question because rural shows would not attract press reviews or media attraction. Mendl says that actors would prefer to perform in the National Theatre instead of a rural setting. This, then goes in a spiral – since the rural shows can only recruit third or second level cast and crew, and to some extent playwrights to write plays for rural productions, this, in turn, will adversely impact upon the quality of a rural production. Since the quality of the rural shows is inherently compromised, due to the reasons above, they fail to ever tour in urban centres. This means that rural productions miss out on good press reviews and media coverage. We think that this point is highly significant when it comes to thinking about the overall quality of rural productions. This aspect does not seem to bother Johnstone, though. As long as he can create the work that he likes to create, he will not be bothered about not getting national recognition or press coverage. He sternly steers away from having to create work, which eventually attracts some press reviews. Such deliberateness is not palatable to Johnstone.

- c. *Potentials in rural touring:* Verma acknowledges that there are a lot of people who are just curious to know about the ‘other’, and this is especially true in rural counties such as Lincolnshire. He says that “When you come out of London, the qualitative response of the audience is different ... [Whereas] the range of theatre available in London does not match any part of the country and that’s not the case outside. This is certainly not the case in rural counties”. Verma says that this creates an eagerness among rural audience to watch culturally diverse theatre. For him, this is the real potential of rural touring. Exoticism is not a politicised definition of the ‘other’ for Verma, but “[it] is an unexplored territory, full of incredible potential... and there is hunger for the other cultures”. Therefore, performances, even though they are small scale, will be welcomed in rural areas.

Johnstone says that the ‘exotic’ element is the strength of various culturally diverse performances. According to him rural communities will be more willing to come out on a Friday night to watch a conventional *Kathak* dance because they have never watched it before, provided, it is offered locally. Verma’s “curious about the ‘other’” resonates well with Johnstone’s approach. Johnstone, however, acknowledges that the task is one of audience development rather than anything else. Since cities offer a range of choices for their audience people are more at will to choose what they want to see, whereas, the rural audience do not have such choice. Therefore, Johnstone

argues that it is highly important to develop audience for the success of any culturally diverse shows. “Village hall [based theatre] is a massive market”, he says and he feels that better acknowledgement of this fact will help to develop audience there. He says that marketing is key in bringing diversity to rural arts. Knowing ‘who the audience is’ and the ‘place where you present your work’ are central to the success of presenting diverse artistic work in rural areas.

- d. *Strategies suggested:* Jatinder Verma uses play-readings as a method to engage audience when he introduces a non-European play. Such little “taster” sessions provide a useful method through which to create a context for staging a play from a different culture. This, according to Verma, provides assurance to audience to part with their money; such taster sessions become increasingly relevant in the current political and economic climate. Putting on community plays is another strategy that Verma employs to engage audience in Tara Arts. A variation of this strategy with a diversity perspective can work in Lincolnshire.

Performing in an unconventional setting (to break away from the white middle-class audience), such as a restaurant, as in the case of Yellow Earth, is another method to attract audience towards diverse cultural performances. Corner says that the “more unusual the venue” the better the chances are in attracting audience, especially for site specific performances, such as *Last days of Lime House* by Yellow Earth.

BCT’s model of small-scale performances use flexible, multi-purpose sets which are very helpful for travelling to small rural venues and Johnstone highly recommends such an approach. That will potentially also help to keep costs low. The approach resonates well with Yellow Earth’s strategy to performing theatre in restaurants or attracting a client base from Chinese take-aways.

To summarise:

1. The perceived value of rural artistic work, compared to the urban centred artistic work is significantly inferior. This perception affects the quality of cast and crew available for diverse arts work. This, in turn, could affect the quality of diverse artistic work produced in rural areas.
2. Performances based in local venues such as village halls or church halls are identified as having good potential. Because of the particular nature of rural audience, they are more willing to come and watch a play in their local venue, as opposed to town/city based venues.
3. The element of ‘exotic’, with all its problems that ACE and professional artists identifies, can be turned into a success. A hunger for knowing about the ‘other’ is a significant factor, particularly in less urban areas that have limited opportunities to gain such experience.
4. An *a-proscenium* approach – performing in village halls and church halls – is most suitable for engaging rural audience in culturally diverse artistic work. The risk is

- it may further alienate high quality artists from collaborating with such work. It may also affect the scale of the performances.
5. Collaborating with local networks such as a rural touring network, for instance, will enhance opportunities to explore local venues such as village halls or church halls.
 6. Strategies such as play-readings, workshops prior to performance and community plays, narrating local stories, will be helpful methods for audience development in Lincolnshire for promoting culturally diverse arts.

PART TWO

4. SURVEY ANALYSIS

Three surveys were conducted as part of the project. The first one was a general audience survey (hereafter termed **online Survey**), made available online, for members of public in the county, involving 15 questions, such as:

1. Have you watched any non-European Arts in Lincolnshire?
2. Have you watched any non-EU arts from any other locations in the UK?
3. Have you ever taken part in any non-EU cultural/wellbeing activities such as those listed below? (Yoga, Taichi, Bollywood Dance, Chinese Dance, Asian crafts/Henna, African Drumming/music)
4. Do you have any experience of non-EU cultures gained through learning at school/college, living or working abroad or travelling?
5. Would you consider yourself interested in watching performances from other cultures?
6. How can we make it more accessible for you to take part in/watch non-EU arts?
7. Do you think that dance and drama could provide a tool for you to understand different cultures?
8. How long will you be prepared to travel to take part in non-EU arts?
9. Do you have access to private transport?
10. If you do not have access to private transport, would you use public transport to access non-EU arts?

Questions 11-15 asked their age, gender, financial status and ethnicity. 280 participants took part in this survey which was rolled out through social media, our project website, venues where *The Honest thief* was performed and various project partners such as Transported (Arts NK).

The second and third surveys were the survey of our audience for *The Honest Thief*, the second being an online survey dedicated to primary school age children (hereafter referred to as the **children's survey**) who watched a matinee in Lincoln; and the third being a paper survey for audience members (hereafter referred to as the **paper survey**)

who watched the play in the evenings in all venues. We collected 281 responses to these surveys. The paper survey asked the following questions:

1. Have you previously watched any non-EU Arts such as the play you have come to see today?
2. Have you ever taken part in any non-EU cultural activities such as those listed below? (Taichi, Bollywood Dance, Yoga, any other)
3. Do you have any experience of non-EU cultures gained through learning at school/college, living or working abroad or travelling?
4. Are you interested in watching performances from other cultures? (describe the answer)
5. How can we make it more accessible for you to take part in/watch non-EU Arts? (a. Increased availability of opportunities, b. Bring events to local village halls or schools, c. Mix local culture with non-EU cultures, d. Keep costs low, e. any other)
6. Do you have access to private transport?
7. If you do not have access to private transport, would you use public transport to access non-EU arts?
8. Did you enjoy watching the play?
9. Did the play help you understand the non-EU culture showcased in this play?
10. Did blending local elements (eg: Lincolnshire songs and dance) help you to understand the non-European culture showcased in this play?
11. Did having an English cast help you to understand the non-EU culture showcased in this play?
12. Did you think that the play represents good value for money?

The rest of the four questions were about their age, ethnicity, gender and financial status. Questions for the children's survey were considerably simpler. It only had eight questions and focused on only three aspects, their previous experience of taking part in any non-european cultural activities, their experience of watching the play and their interest and reasons for watching such plays in future. The questions were:

1. Have you previously watched any Indian drama or dance such as the play, *Charandas Chor: The Honest Thief*?
2. Have you taken part in any Asian/African dance, drama or music activities?
3. Do you have any experience of Asian or African cultures gained through learning at school, living abroad or travelling?
4. Did you enjoy watching the play?
5. What did you like or dislike most in the play (Story, Costume, Music, Dance and each had Like, Neither like nor dislike and Dislike options)
6. Would you like to see plays like this again?
7. If you answered 'yes, very much' or 'yes a little' why would you like to watch such plays again? (options were: a. To hear stories from other cultures, b. To see costumes and colours from other cultures, c. To experience something that I haven't seen before, d. None of the above).

8. Did the play help you to understand Indian culture?

These three surveys returned a combined response from 561 participants; the paper surveys were collected from Lincoln, Louth, Grimsby and Gainsborough. Therefore, the sample consisted of about 0.08% of the total population of Lincolnshire (713,653 according to 2011 census <http://www.research-lincs.org.uk/UI/Documents/2011%20Census%20Estimates%20Info%20Sheet%20unrounded.pdf>). Ethical approval to conduct the survey was gained from the University of Lincoln Ethics committee prior to the start of all surveys. Furthermore, the term Non-European art was defined as performances from Asian, African, Middle Eastern or any cultural background outside Europe. This definition was included and clarified in all surveys.

We also need to explain why we chose to use non-European as opposed to non-Western. West and East present a rather complicated dichotomy, infested by highly reductive definitions. West is an ambiguous entity, and always in relation to where one is looking from. It is not quite clear where the West ends and where the East begins. Turkey, for instance, is keen to join the European union, but does being part of the EU (if and when that happens in the future) make Turkey a Western country? Furthermore, many Turkish people define themselves as Asians, claiming that they are part of West Asia. Australia, when looking from Britain, is closer to several East and South East Asian countries, but Australians consider themselves belonging to the 'West'. Again, it begs us to consider what the West could stand for. A geographical definition of the term 'west' is impossible, a cultural definition will be politically problematic. Given the complexities in defining any arts as simply western and non-western, and in the interest of specificity, we chose to use the term 'non-European'. It may present its own issues in future, given the fact that the UK will soon resign its status as a European nation. We are fully aware of the issues that such a situation might present. Having said that, the majority of artistic activities that currently take place in the county are culturally either British or European anyway (be it dramatic or dance performances, fine or visual art). These were some of our considerations when we decided to use non-European instead of non-Western to define the large variety of culturally diverse arts.

What follows is a detailed analysis of the survey. This is carried out across three sections, a. Financial, ethnic and demographic make-up of participants, b. Experience and interest of participants in non-European arts and c. Audience response to the play performance.

5. Financial, ethnic and demographic make-up of participants

5.1 Age range

Out of our 561 survey participants 61 were primary school children aged 11 or below. 43.15% (85 participants) of the paper survey and 16.54% (45 participants) of the online survey consisted of participants aged 13-19, making a quarter of the combined paper and online surveys (130 out of 500). But please note that 23 participants in the paper survey and 8 participants in the online survey skipped answering this question and

therefore, these calculations are based on those who preferred to answer the specific question. [Including the primary school children to this calculation will give a total of 34% of all 561 survey participants as young people between 10-19.] The audience for the play between the age 20–50 consisted of only 18.6%, while the online participants for the survey for the same age range was 47.5%. Just over 30% of the audience who watched the play were aged 51- 75 or 75 or above; a similar proportion (31.78%) participated in the online survey too. Having said that, when we break down the 30% audience for the play, those aged 66-75 were just over 13% and, perhaps, most notably, 4.6% of our audience were 75 and above. Only a smaller proportion of 66-75 years old (7.72%) took part in the online survey and no one above the age of 75 considered responding to it.

5.2. Ethnicity

Not surprisingly, our audience for the play (evidenced through the paper survey) consisted of 93.04% White British audience, and 6.96% from Asian or African heritage. This is not surprising, given the fact that the total non-white population of Lincolnshire is 2.4%. This is well-reflected in the ethnic nature of audience in rural locations such as Louth and Gainsborough. 100% audience members in Louth were from a White British heritage, as were 86% of the Gainsborough audience for *The Honest Thief*. Lincoln was more multicultural in nature with a small proportion of audience members from an Asian background (9.5%). This is comparable to the statistics of Asian, mixed race and those of African origin in Lincoln, which was just over 5.5% according to the 2011 census (<https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/interactive/2011/may/19/ethnic-breakdown-england-wales>). 84% of the online survey participants were White British and 5.58% were from other white backgrounds. People of Asian or African origins were a mere 0.74%. The ethnic make-up of our audience is somewhat comparable to the audience engagement in *The Honest Thief*. Without the 9.5% audience members from a non-white ethnic background in Lincoln, the ethnic origin of audience members will predominantly remain white-British. However, it is worth noting that only 158 out of 220 paper surveys returned this data with a third skipping the answering of this question. The above reading is entirely based on the data that were returned to us. While going through the paper survey we noticed that a large proportion of the audience in Lincoln, in particular, chose not to disclose their ethnic origin, but we had observed a larger proportion of the Indian community among the audience. But we are unable to account for it since this is not reflected in the survey. On the other hand, only 11 participants skipped answering this question in the online survey.

5.3. Gender and financial status

The majority of our survey participants were women, and men consisted of just over a third of the total survey participants. About 64% of the audience members for the play and 62.5% of the online survey were women. Out of the audience members who watched the play, about 49% of participants were students, 25% were employed, and 24% were retired. It is interesting to see an equal share of audience engagement in the play coming from employed and retired communities. This was not the case in the online survey. Those who were employed consisted of 48%, whereas the student

community made just over 31% and the retired community was a mere 12%. But rather interestingly, our audience to the play in the rural areas, particularly, Gainsborough and Louth largely consisted of a retired community, 79% and 70% respectively. Without the large student community (secondary school children) who turned up to watch the play in Grimsby, the retired community would have been the largest audience group for the play.

To summarise:

1. More needs to be done to attract those who are capable of paying to go to theatre to watch plays from diverse cultural backgrounds especially those who are aged 20-50.
2. 74% of the combined audience members in Louth and Gainsborough were from retired communities. They were willing to part with their monies to watch a culturally diverse play, which is promising.
3. Approximately two thirds of all audience for the play were women. At this stage, we are not sure if this particular data will have any impact on the project.
4. It is for the first time that a theatre play of Indian origin is performed in Lincolnshire and it is the first time that the Indian/British Indian community has been engaged in a play emanating from their own culture. But their engagement in the project was mainly owing to the contacts explored by the key investigators for the project. Additionally, marketing for the play was also undertaken through local Indian community organisations in Lincoln (Lincs India Society) and Grimsby (Hindu Cultural Society), whom we thank wholeheartedly. The project has identified a potential audience community for our future performances. Dedicated programmes to sustain their interest, thereby building an audience base will largely benefit the artistic diversity of Lincoln, in particular.
5. Since the majority of our audience for the play consisted of the white British community (nearly 94%), it is highly significant to consider the Lincolnshire community as a target audience for any future activities around artistic/cultural diversity, instead of a predominantly Asian audience. Having said that, I am aware of a performance by a highly popular Bollywood star, Naseeruddin Shah in the Lincoln Performing Arts Centre, a week after the completion of the touring of *The Honest Thief*, which was very well attended by the Indian community from Lincolnshire and elsewhere (London, Birmingham, Sheffield, Newcastle) but it still was not sold out. But as we find through these surveys, there is a clear appetite for culturally diverse performances (explored below).

6. Experience and interest of participants in non-European arts

This section will assess the way in which the participants responded to questions enquiring 1. their experience of watching/taking part in non-European arts 2. their reasons for being interested (or not) in watching non-European arts 3. what could be done to help them better engage in non-European arts and 4. whether they have means to get to the venues which host non-European arts. These questions formed the key

enquiry in the online survey and a substantial segment in the paper survey and children's survey.

The first question in all surveys was whether the participants watched any non-European performances. The online survey, however, broke it down to two questions: a. whether they have watched any non-EU performances in Lincolnshire and b. any other location in the UK. Not surprisingly, only 26.4% of the online survey participants and 32% of the paper survey participants answered 'yes' to the question. However, 56% of the participants in the children's survey answered 'yes' to this question, which presents a rather puzzling situation. Considering the age of the children who answered the question, we wonder whether they have really understood the question. Or it is also possible that some of them did actually experience a non-European performance in the past, though not in the form of a stage performance, but in the form of a workshop or visit to religious venues such as in Leicester or Nottingham. Turning back to the paper survey and online survey, it is clear that local communities in the county have not had a chance to watch culturally diverse arts from within our county. However, we received a better response to question 2 of the online survey, which asked them whether they watched non-European arts in venues outside Lincolnshire. Just over 39% of the participants answered 'yes'. 101 people who answered 'yes' watched them predominantly in London and nearby places (40 of them) such as Leicester, Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Sheffield. Norwich, Hull and Cambridge were also noted among the places where they watched non-European performances. When we wrote our project proposal to ACE, one of our key claims was the lack of opportunities for our rural communities to experience culturally diverse performances. The participant responses to our surveys provide clear answers that most of the diverse performances take place in big cities and predominantly in London. A third of Lincolnshire communities have had little opportunity to experience culturally diverse arts close to home. Most noticeably, only 2 out of 561 participants skipped answering this question.

The next question was whether they have any experience of non-European arts other than stage performances, specifically, arts and/or wellbeing workshops. Out of 561 survey participants only 17 skipped answering this question. 74% of children answered 'yes' in the children survey, so did 50% of those who took part in the paper survey. The paper survey and online survey had subdivided this question into several headings such as Yoga, Tai-chi, Bollywood Dance, African Drumming etc... [We chose not to do this in the children's survey so as to keep the questions simple and the survey brief.] Over 44% of the paper and online surveys have participated in a yoga session for wellbeing reasons. Smaller proportions of participants experienced Tai-chi, Bollywood dance, some form of Asian crafts and arts such as Henna or African Drumming. Typically, such activities are available in local leisure centres, village halls and school halls. This means that our local communities have had some experience of non-European arts, crafts or wellbeing activities, locally made available to them. Their reasons for engaging in these activities range from 'for wellbeing purposes' to 'just having fun'. Primary school children participating in the children survey, would have had a full range of experience in all kinds of cultural activities through and outside of their school curriculum. It is

highly unlikely for any school child in contemporary Britain not to have had such an experience, unless their parents opted them out of such activities due to personal or religious reasons.

The following question in the survey enquired if the participants had any experience of non-European cultures by learning from school, travelling or working abroad. 80% of the children, 55% of online survey participants and 52% of paper survey participants answered 'yes'. Only 7 participants across all surveys skipped answering this question. Most of them also described the way in which they gained such experience; much of it was through travelling to different parts of the world, through family members and friends, school or university education activities or through marriage. Analysing the previous questions, it is clear that the people in the county, although having some experience of non-European cultures as well as arts/crafts/wellbeing activities, through taking part in various workshops, travelling or learning about those as part of a structured educational curriculum, however, have limited experience of watching them on Lincolnshire stages. They have either travelled to metropolitan cities to gain such experience or have lived in metropolitan cities in the past, which gave them such experience.

The previous discussion leads to the next significant question, enquiring if they are really interested in watching performances from other cultures. 25 participants of the paper survey, 3 participants of the online survey and 2 participants of the children's survey skipped answering this question. However, the response to this question from those who answered it was overwhelmingly positive. 92% of all survey participants who answered this question said 'yes'. Several participants also chose to give a reason for answering 'yes' (165). Most of them stated that watching performances from other cultures is "a good way to begin to understand the culture you are living amongst". A good majority considered watching culturally diverse performances as a means of being educated about customs and traditions practiced in other parts of the world. We quote a selection of very interesting responses below:

"I am already overwhelmed by the domination of Western European art/making of art therefore a platform dedicated to performances from other cultures it would be refreshing, enriching, stimulating. - Especially in our days of Trump politics, Brexit process and the rise of intolerance/racism/xenophobia/sexism and so on, it's even more important and essential the audience to look at other cultures through the tool of art. A different dialogue and way of communication, a different approach towards the Other, a "training" of Empathy and critical thinking are some of what art in any format can achieve."

"Very interested. I remember just after I came over, there was a performance of Tibetan monks in The Collection of the great tubes they could play on. Unforgettable!"

"I would attend my local arts/community centres, if the events were affordable"

"I am always open to learning, about myself as much as other cultures, which have different perspectives to offer and challenge as much as they offer experiences of similarity"

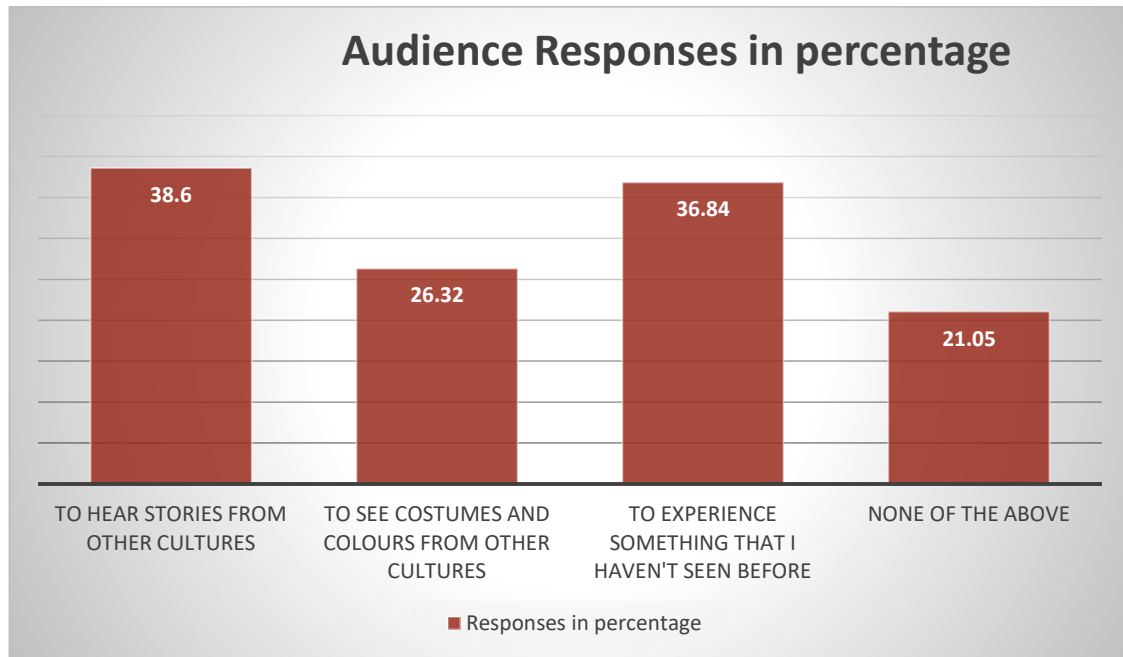
"As chairman of Lincoln's leading promoter of world cinema, I believe passionately in providing access to the best films from around the world, which provide fascinating insights into different lives & cultures."

"Yes, I've experienced so little, but would be interested in things from the middle-east, Asia, pacific islands, south and central America..."

"There's plenty of Western European arts tradition available, but it doesn't provide me with all I want to encounter and experience. I like to have my horizons extended and my perceptions challenged, it makes the world for me a richer place to be."

This evidence is pretty self-explanatory to prove that most of our participants possessed a genuine interest in watching culturally diverse arts, with many acknowledging that arts is a medium for cultural learning. Question number 7 in the online survey [not the other two surveys] enquired whether the participants believed that drama and dance could provide a tool to understand different cultures. 66% answered 'yes' to this question. There is undoubtedly a clear demand from our public to watch non-European arts. The fact that they pay money to take part in various non-European arts/crafts/wellbeing activities when made available locally provides us with enough evidence to argue the case (while we fully acknowledge that wellbeing activities can be perceived differently to artistic activities). Relating participant responses between the above questions and one of the previous questions about their experience of watching non-European arts outside Lincolnshire also indicates why they had to watch non-European performances from outside Lincolnshire and not from the county. The fact is, rural counties such as Lincolnshire are currently not providing such opportunities to its people, making them travel distances to gain such experience. The reasons for this will be explored in the further sections of this report.

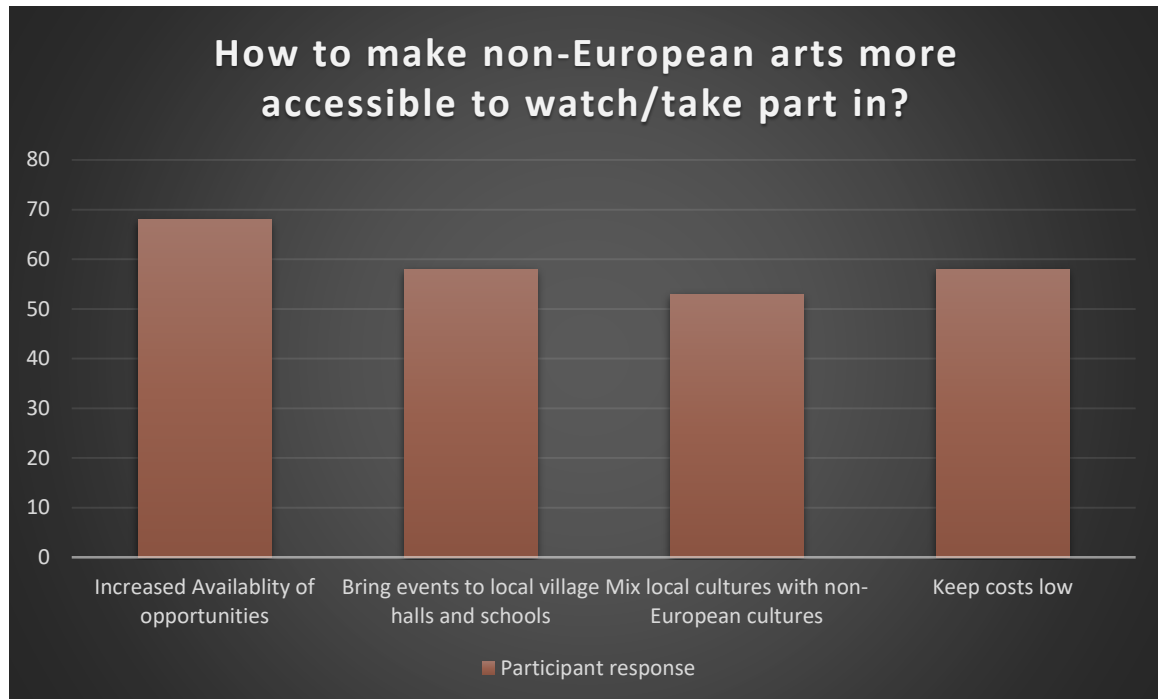
The children's survey unpacked this question so that the children could understand it easily. The question itself was 'would you like to see plays like this again? If you answered 'yes very much' or 'yes a little' why would you like to watch such plays (as *The Honest Thief*) again?' The options given for the second half of the question were a. to hear stories from other cultures, b. to see costumes and colours from other cultures, c. to experience something that I haven't seen before and d. none of the above. The below graph helps us to understand their response.



The chart is self-explanatory and helps us understand what the children want from a culturally diverse experience.

We then asked people what could be done to improve audience engagement in culturally diverse arts. This question was omitted from the children's survey because of the complexity of the question and the options provided. In both the paper survey and the online survey the options given included a. Increased availability of opportunities, b. Bring events to local village halls or schools, c. Mix local culture with non-European cultures, d. Keep costs low and e. Continuous small scale events (only in online survey). A total of 46 people skipped answering this question.

68% of the survey participants wanted more opportunities available to watch non-European performances, whereas 58% claimed that bringing diverse arts to local village halls and schools would make them more accessible. A similar number (57.8%) suggested that keeping the costs low would help the accessibility of non-European arts. However, we are slightly surprised to find that mixing local cultures with other diverse cultures of the world, resulting in an intercultural performance, was not rated as highly as other elements by our participants (53%). The post-performance audience survey also confirms the same (will discuss in detail in the next section). The online survey had one more option of 'continuous, small scale events'; 137 online survey participants (48% of the online survey) chose this option as an appropriate strategy to engage audience in culturally diverse arts. Below is a chart summarising our findings for this question. The answers are in percentages.



Besides, the participants also commented that accessing any form of activities, let alone arts, was challenging for those who lived in rural areas since the “last bus [is at] 5.15 pm”. Other comments included offering workshops prior to performance, advertising it widely, and giving public/street performances. Some helpful comments are as below:

“Festival on music/dance/theatre/traditions/aesthetics/food/craftsmanship/ ceremonies of a specific non European culture (like the Japanese festival that took place in Lincoln on the 11th-18th of February), accessible to everyone from the local and wider community. Culture exchange between English and Non-European institutions/companies/collectives.”

“Incorporating with food festivals/markets”

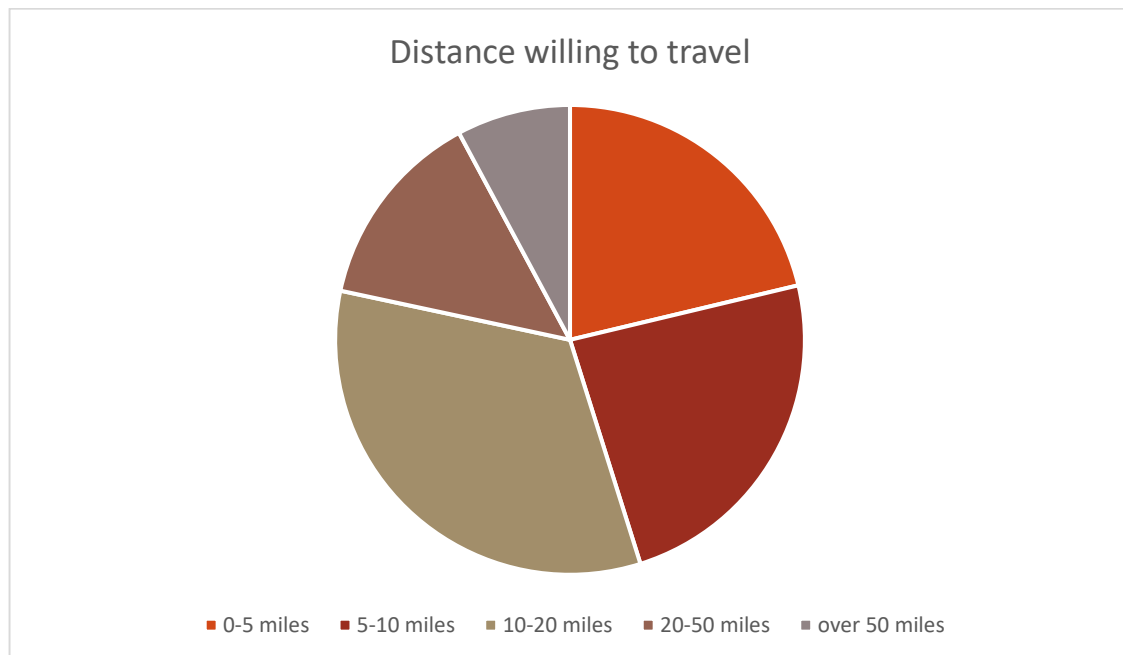
“Gain access to main venues - eg: Cathedral, castle in Lincoln; Lincolnshire Showground; football clubs etc”

“Themed days with cinema, food etc. Buddhist meditation in Lincoln”

When analysing these questions, it is apparent that the increased availability of opportunities and bringing performances to local venues is most beneficial in enhancing audience participation in non-European arts. Subsidising tickets will also help better promotion of non-European arts in the county.

The last question(s) grouped in the current section discuss transport issues. No audience engagement in any form of arts is possible without access to transport. The majority of our survey participants had access to some form of private transport, although a third had no access to their own transport (this question was not asked in the children’s

survey, due to the nature of the question). The online survey asked how far the participants would be willing to travel to watch diverse arts. The result is as below:



A large proportion of our online survey participants clearly stated that they would be unwilling to travel long distances to access diverse arts. That explains the figures that we received for the very first question of the survey – whether they have watched any non-European arts. Only a third of our paper survey participants watched any sort of diverse arts and only 39% of online survey participants watched them elsewhere. Unless opportunities are brought close to home, there will be limited engagement from the Lincolnshire community in culturally diverse arts activities.

To summarise:

1. Lincolnshire communities have limited experience of watching culturally diverse performances. But people have taken part in various non-European arts/crafts/wellbeing activities offered locally to them. They are also willing to pay to engage in such activities as well.
2. But there is substantial interest among communities to experience and/or watch performances from diverse cultures.
3. The participant responses to our surveys provide clear answers that many of the diverse performances take place in big cities and predominantly in London. A third of the Lincolnshire community have had little opportunity to experience culturally diverse arts close to home.
4. They have either travelled to metropolitan cities to gain such experience or have lived in metropolitan cities in the past, which gave them such experience.

5. Increasing the availability of opportunities and bringing performances to local venues are most beneficial in enhancing audience participation in non-European arts. Subsidising tickets will also help better promotion of non-European arts in the county.
6. Unless opportunities are brought close to home, there will be limited engagement from the Lincolnshire community in culturally diverse arts activities.

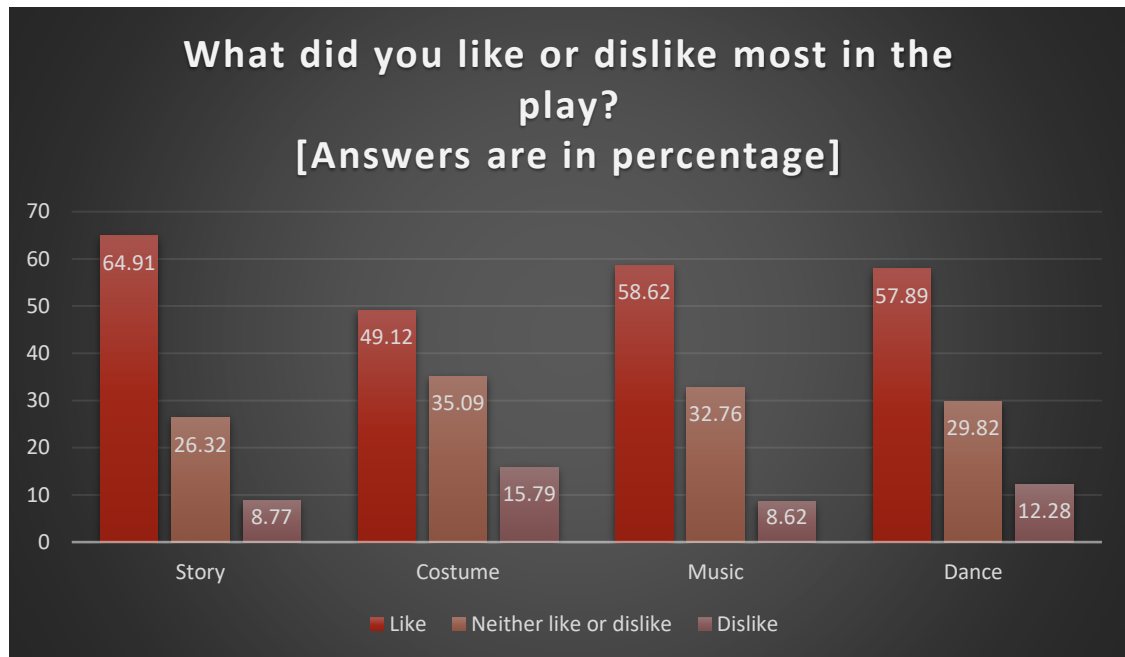
7. Audience response to the play performance

Two surveys, the paper survey and the children's survey are analysed in this section; therefore, this section will be based on the total number of 281 surveys (out of a total audience number of 441) returned to us. The online survey was aimed at those people who did not watch the play, but still wanted to voice their opinion on this project's main topic of enquiry. The level of satisfaction for the performance was overwhelmingly positive – 83% of children's survey participants and 93% of the paper survey participants answered this question as either 'yes, very much' or 'yes, a little'. Please note that 13 participants in the paper survey and 1 participant in the children's survey skipped answering this question.

A substantial proportion of the audience also made comments expanding upon aspects in the play that they liked or disliked. People commented on the overall quality of the production, quality of singing, costumes and props as well as the energy of the actors. Here, rather than expanding upon the comments that we received, we are focusing attention on a selection of comments from people who said, earlier in the survey, that they would not wish to watch culturally diverse performances. A small number of participants in the paper survey claimed that they would not be interested in watching a culturally diverse performance. Yet, when answering the post-show questions on the quality of the production and the enjoyability of the play, they were most certainly positive. Although such audience were a minority (only 3 in total), we measure the real value of the project when analysing their responses. The fact that the production successfully created a positive shift in attitude of two retired, 75+ women from Gainsborough, who openly declared that they would not be interested in watching a non-European play is a real success story of this project.

The play was most successful in Gainsborough and Lincoln. Lincoln was successful in terms of the audience numbers, the audience experience/response to the play and the overall experience of the cast and crew. But, from an impact point of view of the project and play, we would rate the Gainsborough show as the most successful. On the day of the Gainsborough show, prior to the performance, we had met a leading person in the Lincolnshire arts sector who mentioned that getting audience for an Indian play in Gainsborough would be challenging. In his opinion, and indeed, based on his experience, the show would attract a maximum of 10 audience members. Although modest, we had a total of 30 audience members watching the show, three times the number that he predicted. But most importantly, we received the warmest response to

the show from the Gainsborough audience. Several audience members came and spoke to us offering help in bringing more people (their friends and families) for similar performances, if we were to take our production there again. Similarly, in Louth, *The Honest Thief* was the first Asian theatrical performance after a long gap of 6 years (a *Kathakali* show was performed there in 2010).



Once again, the audience numbers were similar. Our experience of touring the play and the audience response, both in paper surveys and direct conversations, demonstrate that an audience base can be built for non-European performances in Lincolnshire. All we have to do is to develop strategies. We have discussed some of this in the previous section (Conversations. P.6)

Participants of the children's survey answered question specifically on aspects such as storyline, costume, music and dance. The below chart is self-explanatory and it is clear what the children liked or disliked.

A very small percentage of children disliked the aspects in question here. It is most encouraging to see that the storyline of the play attracted most positive response from the children, followed by the music. Overall, it can be concluded that children liked the play and appreciated it very much.

The paper survey asked whether the participants learned anything about the Indian culture through watching the play, whether the intercultural nature of the performance helped them understand the Indian culture displayed and if using an English cast was more helpful in following the storyline. These questions were premised on a hypothesis that intercultural elements and an English cast would help the accessibility (from a

cultural perspective) of the performance to rural communities, who are relatively inexperienced in watching culturally diverse performances. When 80% of the paper survey participants responded that the play helped them to understand the cultural elements showcased in the play, we did not receive a similar response to the intercultural aspect of the performance. Although 65% welcomed the intercultural elements, 35% of the audience members did not think that they worked. Similarly, an English cast, though welcomed by 67% of the audience, was not quite palatable to a large cross section of the audience members. However, we are glad to see that about 90% of the audience members considered the play offered good value for money. The audience responses as described in the above paragraph make us reconsider our hypothesis that an intercultural performance with an English cast helps the accessibility of a non-European performance to the rural audience. Although we received responses to the production such as it was an “interesting Brecht-like piece” and “like one of the Oscar Wilde’s short stories”, the same person who made these comments also stated that “a mixed European + non-European cast would have been better”. Another audience member stated that “all English cast wouldn’t have made any difference to me”. One audience member stated that the play was “not fully what I was expecting – thought would be entirely Indian [cast]” and another stated that “this [survey] form implies that I know nothing of Hindu culture... I understand the culture, understanding culture is not a problem”. Analysing the general audience response to the intercultural aspects of the performance points to the fact that some people may want to see the original cultural elements, unaltered and unmediated in a theatrical performance.

A question of ‘exoticism’ that we discussed earlier is highly relevant in this context. The rural audience in Lincolnshire would like to encounter the ‘other’ in its original form so that it entertains and informs them, providing a better cultural learning. The communities in Lincolnshire have limited opportunity to watch culturally diverse performances, and when a play from a non-European cultural context appears in Lincolnshire the audience might expect a culturally specific cast and performance aspects. Having said that, when we start to tour a performance rich in cultural aspects, it may throw its own new issues anyway. Therefore, striking a balance is key here.

To summarise:

1. The production of *The Honest Thief* was successful, demonstrating that a good quality performance, European or non-European, can attract audience even in remote villages.
2. Intercultural elements and use of an English cast were well appreciated by a large proportion of the audience (65%) though a small proportion of the audience (35%) wanted to see the ‘authentic’ culture unaltered.
3. The performance had a positive impact in terms of cultural education, entertainment and value for money on audience.
4. The tour has formed a basic groundwork for building an audience base for non-European performances in Lincolnshire. The challenge is to create a continuous engagement with the audience so as to keep their interest alive.

8. Recommendations

To summarise the overall research that we conducted as part of this project, there were two significant channels of enquiry:

1. Consultation with the industry experts, community leaders and officers from various organisations.
2. Public consultation on the matter of audience engagement in culturally diverse performances.

Based on the research as summarised so far, we are certain that the task is one of audience development. But it requires a different kind of thinking because we have identified demand for culturally diverse artistic work in the county. We sent this report to five selected experts in the county who have experience of engaging local communities in artistic activities, such as Nick Jones, ArtsNK; David Gibbons, Head Teacher-Nettleham Junior School; David Lambert, Cultural Solutions; Colin Hopkirk, Lincolnshire County Council; Dominic Symonds, University of Lincoln. Their comments and suggestions are given below:

1. Initiate small-scale and continuous multi-cultural activities in selected locations in the county
2. Organise such events in village halls, church halls and local schools alongside the town-based Arts Centre venues.
3. Initiate projects in collaboration with urban based arts organisations and artists (such as those discussed in the relevant sections above) in order to strengthen the quality and quantity of multi-cultural artistic activities in the county.
4. Develop a specific programme for cultural learning focusing on schools leading to enhanced community cohesion at the village level.
5. Curate day-time programmes to engage retired communities in multi-cultural artistic activities using a variety of venues.
6. Acknowledgement of the necessity for a different thinking around the rural dynamics within the *Creative Case for diversity*.
7. Dedicated policy and ring-fenced funding to promote artistic (cultural) diversity in rural England.
8. Proposing a policy change in Lottery funding to implement a contractual clause for NPOs enabling hosting and/or conducting rural touring on a regular basis.

9. Impacts

Nick Jones acknowledges that this project has influenced ArtsNK's approach to the *Creative Case*. He has used this report in developing practical response to cultural diversity across its whole programme. In response to the report, Jatinder Verma, the Artistic Director of Tara Arts theatre in an email (08 Nov 2017, at 00:48) acknowledged the impact of the study in Tara's rural touring policy saying that "I begin to consider the possibility of taking some Tara Projects on rural tours". This is a clear long-term impact

of the project on a London based British Asian theatre company. David Gibbons makes two suggestions: 1. He acknowledges that school is a good venue for performances and that school is often the only venue in a village. Schools could offer workshops on diverse arts and host small scale, culturally diverse performances. [That could potentially be part of his school's cultural diversity agenda in the future.] This could potentially result in multiple outcomes such as cultural learning involving families and community engagement in non-European arts at a local level. 2. He urges that touring outside London, specifically in rural theatres, could be added as a contractual clause for Lottery funds. This would invariably make the theatre organisations/artists contractually obliged to perform in rural venues, resulting in enhanced rural-urban interaction in cultural activities. Lincolnshire arts sector will be particularly benefitted through such interactions. David Lambert comments that programming more matinees will attract the retired communities towards any artistic activities including culturally diverse arts. He says that daytime will be suitable for over 60s audience mainly because of transport issues, particularly in winter months. He recommends long term strategic funding schemes, such as strategic touring, to develop audience for culturally diverse artistic work in Lincolnshire.